



PLATYCERCUS FLAVIVENTRIS.

PLATYCERCUS FLAVIVENTRIS.

Yellow-bellied Parrakeet.

Psittacus flaviventris, Temm. in Linn. Trans., vol. xiii. pp. 116-118.

——— *Brownii*, Kuhl, Nova Acta, etc., vol. x. p. 56. no. 90.

Perruche à large queue, Le Vaill. Hist. Nat. des Perr., pl. 80.

Van Diemen's Parrot?, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. ii. p. 130. no. 33.

Platycercus flaviventris, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 281.—Gould in Syn. Birds of Australia, Part II.

Sulphur-headed Parrot?, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. ii. p. 133. no. 35.

New Caledonian Parrot?, Lath. Ib., vol. ii. p. 173. no. 86.

Psittacus Caledonicus?, Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. i. p. 102.—Gmel. Linn., vol. i. p. 328.

Caledonian Parrot?, Lath. Gen. Syn., vol. i. p. 248.

Green Parrot, Colonists of Van Diemen's Land.

THERE appears to be so much confusion respecting this bird that I have thought it best to adopt M. Temminck's name of *flaviventris*, although I have little doubt that the *Psittacus Caledonicus* of Latham, as well as most of the other synonyms given above, refer to the same bird.

It is dispersed over all parts of Van Diemen's Land and the islands in Bass's Straits; but is not confined to particular localities like the *Platycercus eximius*, with which it sometimes associates. It keeps in small companies, which appear to be the brood of a single pair, and frequents every variety of situation, from the low-crowned hills and gulleys in the depths of the forest to the open cleared lands and gardens of the settlers. It runs over the ground with great facility, and when observed in small flocks searching for seeds among the tall grass of the open parts, few birds are seen to greater advantage.

Independently of grass-seeds, the flowers of the *Eucalypti*, insects and their larvæ constitute a considerable portion of the food of this bird, and it may be often seen very busily engaged about the branches loaded with flowers in the depths of the forest far away from any cleared lands.

Its powers of flight are very considerable, and it readily passes from one district to another whenever a scarcity of food or any other cause prompts it so to do; the passage being performed in a succession of wide undulating sweeps; hence it not unfrequently happens that large flights leave the forest with a shrill whistling call, and descend to the newly ripened corn of the settlers, and there commit such serious havoc as to call down the vengeance of the farmer on the whole race.

Most of my readers are doubtless aware that Parrots are frequently eaten by man, but few of them are, perhaps, prepared to hear that many species of the family constitute at certain seasons a staple portion of the food of the settlers: soon after the establishment of the colonies of Van Diemen's Land, pies made of the bird here represented were commonly eaten at every table, and even at the present time are not of unfrequent occurrence. It was not long after my arrival in the country before I tested the goodness of the flesh of this bird as a viand, and I found it so excellent that I partook of it whenever an opportunity for my so doing presented itself. It is delicate, tender, and well-flavoured; but, like that of all other birds, is not so good at some seasons as at others, and very old birds are of course not equal to those of one year old. If we take into consideration the kind of food upon which it subsists, the extreme delicacy and fineness of its skin, and its comparatively inactive mode of life, we might naturally conclude that its flesh would be such as I have described it to be; and although this observation applies more or less to all the species of the genera *Platycercus* and *Euphema*, I consider the present bird to be in this respect pre-eminent.

Like other species of the genus, it bears confinement well; and although it is not so frequently met with in the cage or the aviary as some of its more gaily attired brethren, it must not be attributed to any inaptitude for domestication on the part of the bird.

The sexes during the first year are not to be distinguished from each other, but when fully adult, the female is smaller in size and less brilliantly coloured than her mate.

Holes in the large gum-trees afford a natural breeding-place. The eggs, which are laid in September and the three following months, are pure white, and six or eight in number, one inch and two lines long by eleven and a half lines broad. When the young are first hatched they are covered with long, white down, and present an appearance not very dissimilar to a round ball of white cotton-wool.

I found this species very abundant on the banks of the Tamar, and in one instance I saw hundreds congregated at a barn-door among the straw of some recently-thrashed corn, precisely after the manner of the Sparrow and Pigeon in England.

Forehead crimson; crown of the head and back of the neck pale yellow, each feather very slightly margined with brown; space under the eye dull crimson; cheeks blue; back and shoulders dark olive-black, each feather edged with green; middle of the wings blue; the basal half of the primaries blue on their external edges, the remainder blackish brown; rump and two middle tail-feathers green, the remainder of the tail-feathers dark blue at the base, lighter towards the tip; under surface of the body yellow; bill flesh-colour; feet greyish brown.

The adults of both sexes are very similar, but a considerable difference exists in birds of different ages, the young of the year being greenish olive with a slight tinge of blue on the cheeks, wings, and outer tail-feathers, and a faint indication of the red mark on the forehead. As they advance in age they gradually assume the plumage of the adult, which is not fully accomplished until the second or third year.

The Plate represents fully adult sexes of the natural size.